

18. FIRST RECORD OF A SKIN NEMATODE ON AN INDIAN MUGGER
CROCODILE
(*CROCODYLUS PALUSTRIS*)
(With a text-figure)



Fig. 1. Skin nematode "tracks" on the ventral skin of a *Crocodylus palustris* at Madras Crocodile Bank.

The presence of "serpentine tunnels" on the belly skin of crocodilians has been reported in literature on the skin trade (King and Brazaitas 1971). More recently Ashford and Muller (1978) described a new genus and species of nematode (*Paratrichosoma crocodilus*) found on skins of the New Guinea crocodile (*Crocodylus novaeguineae*). In their paper they describe their morphology and what little is known of the habits of these nematodes and point out that similar nematodes have been found in monkeys and tree shrews.

While the worms may not cause any pathological effects in crocodilians, their trails or tunnels can damage the skin significantly in commercial terms (see Figure 1). The first record of such a nematode in

India was made at the Madras Crocodile Bank in 1983 on the mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*), when one living animal was found to have nematode trails on portions of its ventral scales as shown in Figure 1. No worms were collected, so it is not certain which nematode we have here, but it is planned to attempt to collect the parasite the next time it is detected in one of our crocodiles.

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